

On the Global Community of Private International Law - Impressions from Brazil

From August 3-5 this year, the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro hosted the 7th biennial conference of the Journal of Private International Law. Aply organized by Nadia de Araujo and Daniela Vargas from the host institution, together with Paul Beaumont from Aberdeen, the conference was a great success, as concerns both the quality and quantity of the presentations. Instead of a conference report, I want to provide some, undoubtedly subjective, impressions as concerns the emerging global community of private international law.

First, no less than 168 participants attended, from all over the world. The Journal conference has, by now, become something like a World Congress of Private International Law. This is no small achievement. The Journal of Private International Law started out in 2005 as a very doctrinal publication focusing primarily on common law systems and European private international law. Fittingly, the first two conferences took place in the UK. It was a very wise decision to move, after that, to cities in other countries—New York (2009), Milan (2011), Madrid (2013) and now, after a return to the UK (Cambridge) for the ten-year anniversary in 2015, Rio de Janeiro (2017). By now, it can be said that Journal and conference both really represent the world. And what is emerging is a global community that comes together at these and other events.

Second, this first Journal conference in Latin America was an excellent opportunity to showcase the tremendous developments of the discipline on this Continent. Latin America, the region that created the Código Bustamante, has long produced excellent scholars in private international law. However, for some time the discipline appeared, at least to the outside observer, marginalized, caught between a very doctrinal approach on the one side and a very philosophical one on the other, both often without connection to actual practice. In recent years, this has changed, for a number of reasons: the Hague Conference established a bureau, led by Ignacio Goicoechea; a young generation of scholars connects theory and practice, doctrine and interdisciplinarity; legislators are, at long last, replacing antiquated legislation. Many Latin American scholars and

practitioners at the conference proved that interest and quality. But the best sign for the vitality of the field were the many excellent Brazilian students who followed the conference with enthusiasm and expertise.

Third, and finally, this emerging globalization captures all regions, but not to the same degree. The great importance of Latin America in Rio was no surprise. Nor was the great role that European private international law, a testament not only both to the European background of the journal and the more generous travel budgets in European universities, but also to the legislative and scholarly developments in Europe. Asia was somewhat less well represented, as far as I could see, despite exciting developments there (including current work on Asian Principles of Private International Law), but several presentations dealt with Asian development. The most palpable absence concerned the United States. There were only two participants from the US, fewer than there were Nigerians. In a not so distant past, US private international law was the avant-garde of the discipline worldwide. When the Second Restatement was being discussed, the whole world was watching what the conflicts revolution would yield. Now, a third Restatement is underway. But I heard no word about that from participants in Rio, and the Restatement's reporters did not use the occasion to advertise their project. The United States is no longer leading the globalization of the field. Will it at least follow?